

FROM OUR NEW CHAIRMAN



It seems like quite a long time ago that I was part of a small group of people who got together to consider whether a University of the Third Age – U3A group, would be feasible for System and District.

After six months of preparation, the exploratory meeting was planned for Spring of 2015, posters put up around the area and advertised in the local press.

It was hoped that 50 people might come, and from that we could recruit enough people to take us to the next stage. We bought refreshments to cope with that number and waited nervously to see if anyone would come through the door of the Malthouse Suite. In fact, 140 people filled the room, and we were astonished.

Later, when we asked for volunteers to stay behind to form a Steering Committee, we were delighted that so many skilled and dedicated members of

our community were willing to help launch the U3A in our district. One of those people was Colin Grimes, who'd only come along to collect his wife Norma! Colin is well known and respected in the district, and brought a wealth of knowledge from his professional and voluntary work life that would prove invaluable to our fledgling organisation as we ploughed our way through Charity Law, Trusteeship, set up of constitutions, and all the other matters that go on behind the scenes.

Colin agreed to be our Chairman as we moved into the next phase of development, and with the support of the Bowls Club, enabled us to meet in their premises as a committee, free of charge until we could raise some funds of our own. These things really matter!

During the past three years, Colin has made wonderful contributions, large and small. He's Chaired our sometimes rowdy General and committee meetings, recorded all the decisions, started off Vitality! Newsletter produced all our membership cards and programmes, and as we've grown in numbers to 380 members with over 40 groups operating across the district, he's guided us with grace and humility.

This year, the work that Colin has done in Syston and District was officially recognised when he was named 'Citizen of the Year' and we're proud to claim him as our U3A Founding Chairman.

After 3 years as Chairman of Syston and District U3A Colin handed over the reins at the Annual General Meeting on June 12th 2019 to me, Michael Wherton, known already to members as the Vice Chairman and Webmaster.

Other changes to the Committee also took place on the day, and we give thanks to all those who helped to take us to this stage. We couldn't have done it without you, and we've some plans for the future that we look forward to sharing with all our members in the coming year.

Michael Wherton

Chairman Syston and District U3A

YOUR NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair– Michael Wherton,

Vice-Chair – Clive Iliffe,

Treasurer – Christine Ringrose,

Secretary – Brian King,

Membership Secretary - Norma Grimes,

Assistant Treasurer - Jackie Henson,

Group Co-ordinators – Sheila Driver and Janet Downes,

Speaker Finder – Patricia Wherton,

Catering Team Organizer – Gillian Clarke

Assistant Speaker Host – Cynthia Baker,

Web Master – John Winter,

Newsletter Editor & Public Relations Officer – Julie Johnson,

Access & Inclusivity Officer- Susan Alexander,

Meet & Greet Team Organizer - Dorothy Clarke,

Committee Members – Margaret King and Diane Batson.

Those names in bold are new to their roles, although not necessarily new to the Executive Committee.

Apologies if you have tried to email new postholders and experienced problems, unfortunately the process of transferring U3A addresses is not as straightforward as thought. Holidays have impacted on attempts to fix the problem, but those affected are getting together with our IT guru Dave Palmer to resolve the issues on 3rd July.

THANK YOU TO MARGARET KING

Those of you who saw the AGM newsletter will be aware that it was the last edition of **Vitality!** produced by Margaret. The problems transferring U3A email addresses mean that your new editor has needed to call on her help in getting the July edition out. So, thanks Margaret, both for helping me out and for your sterling work over the past couple of years.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW EDITOR

Some of you will know me from the groups I am involved with, others will have been more fortunate and avoided me! Your new chairman, on learning that I was still immersed in the world of paid employ when the Syston and District U3A was being formed, has decided I am the “baby” of the Executive Committee. However, the U3A newsletter is not my first foray into editing publications for organisations or being involved with their committees. With a five-year break since editing newsletters, I had forgotten about the frustrations of the task, I have soon been reminded. Please bear with me as I get to grips with the changes to “word” since I last did more than basic word processing. If those that know me notice that I have less hair than before, they will know I’ve had a few hair-tearing out moments.

The message I would like to send out is that this is your newsletter, if you would like to see something changed, added, let me know. If any of you has anything to contribute to its content, please, send it to me. (Using the U3A editor address - Once we’ve solved the email issue), in the meantime use my own email juliedjohnson@yahoo.com If you are out and about in Syston and the surrounding area with your camera and capture something of beauty, or take a snap on your mobile phone, why not share it with us? I’m sure many of us miss places of interest because we don’t know they exist, despite them being on our doorstep. The U3A is about learning, so if you have any hints or tips that might help others, don’t be shy, share!

Julie Johnson

GROUP NEWS

KURLING

The Kurling Group had another fun morning Kurling with the usual laughs. Due to holidays we were a bit short on numbers last month not that that was allowed to dampen the spirits. With a birthday to celebrate the cakes went down well with the biscuits, tea and coffee. On the question of numbers, we are always looking for new members, absolutely no experience, needed just the ability to have some fun. We meet the first Monday morning in the month and if you are interested please contact me or any committee member. It is accepted that Mondays are not convenient for many people, so we are trying to set up a second group meeting possibly on a Wednesday or Thursday morning or maybe Friday afternoon. If this interests you, again contact me or any committee member.

GARDEN GROUP

Gardening Group Visit to Hebb's Farm House, Stoke Bardolph

This garden in Nottinghamshire is owned by Stuart Dixon, a well-known gardener in the Midlands, who had given a talk to our group previously. We were interested therefore to see his garden which he had created from a wilderness of brambles and stinging nettles.

The weather had been poor, but we arrived in sunshine and had begun our tour of his garden when there was an unexpected downpour. Stuart called us all into his lovely old farmhouse where we were made extremely welcome and tucked into our tea and scones (delicious). When the storm had passed over, we were able to get outside.

The garden was beautiful and very interesting with a number of different areas, lovely herbaceous borders, a wooded and wild area, and a fabulous display of roses, each clearly named. It was a most enjoyable afternoon.

Lesley Campton

SYSTON IN BLOOM



Here are some members of the gardening group contributing towards the Syston in Bloom displays. Can you place the spot where this planter is sited? See page 8 for the answer.

THE ARCHERS

This is not a story about country folk but of when an army of U3a archers invaded Syston Rugby Club on June 19th.

Luckily the weather had decided to improve.

Although there was often a slight quiver, all rose to the occasion and aimed high!

Under the excellent tutelage of the Fosse Company of Archers, all overcame the slings of outrageous fortune to achieve success and had great fun along the way.

Our tutors made it a thoroughly entertaining evening and the session ended with two competitions.

Divided into four teams; they chose the names, and these were the final scores.

The Cack-handers.	363
Goggles.	303
Acers.	384
Norman's Bulls Eyes.	328

Finally, the most successful male and female contestants:

Bob Wise and Margaret King

All enjoyed the evening and felt that they had added another string to their bow.

Janet Downes



Following Janet's tone, it seems the Acers chose their name well, the Cack-handers weren't quite so cack-handed as they thought, Norman's Bulls Eyes didn't score as many bulls' eyes as they expected, and the Goggles maybe should have visited Specsavers!

CREATIVE WRITING

The group is looking for new members. We have lost some of our band due to illness and other reasons. Please do not think you need to be a Dickens, Byron or Shakespeare. The group is a mixture of those who have been writing for years, some who did no creative writing before joining us and others who wrote in their youth, then stopped when adult life caught up with them. It matters not whether your interest is in poetry or prose, whether you prefer pure fiction, fiction based on fact, or even writing something like a blog. If you don't know where your talents might lie, come along and have a go at a variety of writing genres. We are a supportive group aimed at giving people a chance to share their work. If you'd like to get a flavour of what we are about, join us in Syston Library on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm.

The Syston Happy Ukulele Band

A report from Len Abraham, Group Leader and Dave Houseman, Deputy Group Leader.

The U3A Syston Happy Ukulele Band started about 16 months ago. Presently we have about 50 hardworking diligent members. The overwhelming majority had never played any musical instruments before they joined the band.



The band meets every Friday at The Brookside Club, next to the Brookside Café, near the blue bridge, otherwise known as the Millennium Bridge, Syston, at 1.45pm to commence at 2pm and finish at 3.30.



Over the last year we have performed at numerous local venues, the most recent being on Saturday 8th June. It was for a Community Barbecue organised by Friends of Syston Churches in a house in Exeter Close, Syston.

The audience enthusiastically joined in the singing and really enjoyed the afternoon, although attendance was limited due to inclement weather.

Len, or Dave, offer personal one to one tuition in a member's home or elsewhere to enable brand new members to catch up.

If you would like to have an enjoyable weekly sing-along and lots of laughs why not pop in on a Friday afternoon.

Any existing Syston U3A member is more than welcome to attend before they purchase a ukulele, as well as those that are considering becoming U3A members. No prior musical knowledge or prior musical ability whatsoever is required due to the innovative teaching methods used.

Margaret's Vitality! extra gave a brief outline of the talk that followed the recent AGM, but I thought some might appreciate a little more of the detail.

THE RISE OF THE MICROPUB

Syston boasts an addition to the growing numbers of micropubs with the opening of the Beer Pharmacie in December of last year. We welcomed co-owner Dave Noseley to tell us about this relatively new phenomenon. The first micropub opened in 2005. Whilst the number of “standard” pubs has been declining in recent years, the micropub is going in the opposite direction. So, what is a micropub? Well, there's a bit of a clue in the “micro”, most micropubs occupy former shops, small offices and the like. So, they follow the adage of small being beautiful. In general, micropubs have the ethos that good beer and good conversation make a good venue. So, keep your change in your pocket, there are no jukeboxes, fruit machines or the like to tempt you to part with it. Instead, you might mull over a game of cribbage or an old-fashioned board game, and in some you might find live music. If you want a pint of the mass-produced ale on offer at the pub chains, a micropub is not the place to head, but if you crave real ale then you will find a good range on sale. There is also likely to be a range of spirits and tea and coffee available. Food will usually be limited to cold snacks; the limited space doesn't allow for more.

Those running micropubs have the advantage of being free to pick and choose what they sell, and where they buy from. They have no tie to any brewery. Not surprisingly the micropub and microbrewery are close bedfellows. The latter being the relatively small-scale brewing of beers, usually at one location. With brewing the water is crucial to the consistent quality of the beer. The same recipe brewed on different sites won't taste the same. Dave has the arduous task of sampling products and deciding which will make the range on sale. He did throw an offer out to anyone who might like to assist him in this thankless part of the job!

For those who haven't crossed the threshold of the Beer Pharmacie, the name might seem rather strange. However, once you realise the theme is based around 1950's chemists' shops, it starts to make some sense. As does the presence of Cedric, he sits proudly in a dentist's chair – chemists used to perform tooth removal. But, there's no point in offering to buy him a drink, he just couldn't stomach it - being a skeleton. He is regarded as being photogenic, featuring in quite a few selfies taken by patrons. Having a theme to the decor is quite common in this trade, but Dave informed us it took many hours of trawling to pick up the various chemist and medical items, and to source, manipulate and print the masses of posters that adorn the walls. He found that “Chemist” couldn't be used in the name, apparently only businesses that actually are chemists can include it in their signage. Each micropub is very much a one off, with no brand image to constrain it. As most are owned and run by one or two people, they are very much “hands on” and know their patrons.

Micropubs attract a wide age range of customers, the generation barrier doesn't seem to exist. Conversation flows across and around the cosy sized venues, between those who don't know each other, as well as those who do. Many welcome dogs and children - with well-behaved parents of course. Although Dave did tell us that the only fight he'd had on the premises was between a couple of dogs! But he does still welcome our canine friends. The upstairs facilities at the Beer Pharmacie, 2 rooms, are available for use by community groups for free – where can you get something for nothing these days? Putting themselves at the heart of the community is something else micropubs are noted for.

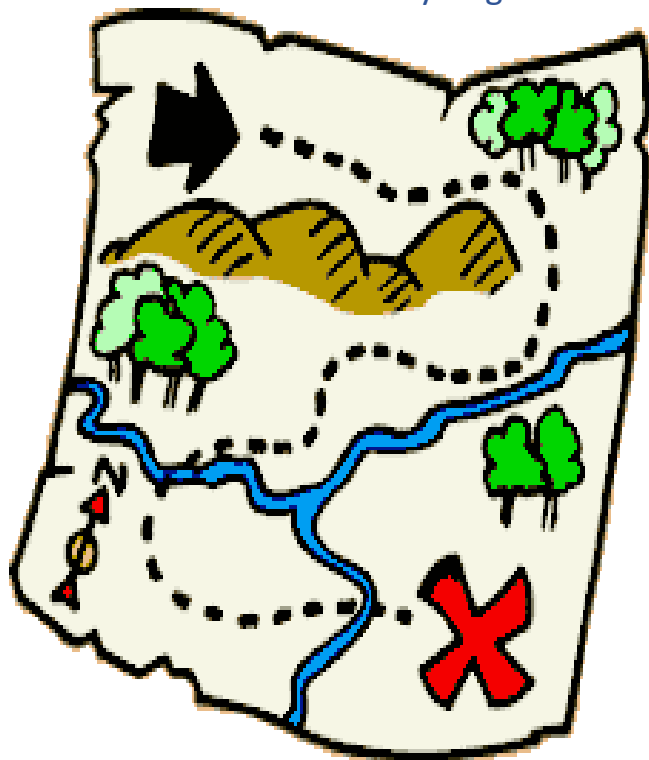
WHAT'S ON NEXT?

NEXT MONTH'S GENERAL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 10TH JULY

Syston & District Volunteer Centre Present & Future – doors open 10.00am meeting starts 10.30. Syston Conservative Club

THE HUNT IS ON !!

Treasure Hunt - Sunday Aug 18th



If a Sunday Lunch you'd like to eat
Then 12:45 is the time to meet.
Otherwise we'll see you at 2
The choice is really up to you.
It's not a case of Physical Jerks
This is the way our treasure hunt works.
We give you some printed sheets
You solve the clues along the streets,
Then wander back when you have done
We'll mark the sheets to see who's won.
Numbers are limited so don't delay,
To reserve your places send your names today.
Nearer the time, we'll let you know
Just exactly where to go.

Sunday Lunch £11
Treasure Hunt £1 (towards the prizes)

Lyn & Dave Palmer
T: 07710 448253

E: dpalmer192@btinternet.com

The site of the Syston in Bloom container planted up by some of the gardening group is outside the Brookside Café (page 4 refers)

AND FINALLY

By way of linking and advertising several groups at once (the Creative Writing, British history and Family History groups), on the next page is a piece concerning an ancestor of mine who went to Montreal in the mid-19th century. The link to the British History group is both that the Victorian era is being studied, and, the June meeting included a guest speaker, Jane Vale of the Family History group, on the introduction of the census.

WILLIAM PEATMAN'S NEW BEGINNING

When researching my family history, I come across characters that intrigue, people I wish I knew more about. Births, deaths, marriages and census returns form the bedrock of genealogy, a variety of other items can add to the puzzle of a life, a family, but they can never tell the full story. This is a piece fiction woven around fact -

William Peatman was in a reflective mood. The visit of the 1901 census enumerator was partly responsible for that. It brought to mind the census of 50 years earlier. That was a lifetime and many miles of ocean away. An incident earlier in the day was the other catalyst. He'd been visiting in the city when he'd spotted the boy, standing wide-eyed and open-mouthed, an obvious new arrival in Montreal. He was struggling to take in the different world into which he had been thrust, just as William had back in 1853. It was a new beginning for the lad, for many like him, a time of hope following a hazardous sea crossing in the cramped conditions of steerage. Even now William could remember the gloom, smell the stench, feel the fear that had gripped his stomach, as a boy travelling alone. He closed his eyes and could see the below deck area, that would have been the cargo hold on other ships, other journeys, as clearly as if it was yesterday. He forced himself to open his eyes and dismiss the images. Without that horrendous trip he wouldn't have had his own new beginning. As bad as it had been, he wouldn't be where he was now without that voyage across the Atlantic.

In 1851 he'd been living with his Grandparents in the village of Long Bennington near Lincoln, his Uncle Thomas, Aunt Maria and cousin Elizabeth were also in the cottage. They had recently returned from Montreal, with tales of the city that captured the imagination of an 11-year-old boy. They'd been homesick for England, having gone out in 1848, but were positive about Quebec and the opportunities that existed out there. It just hadn't been for them. They had followed Uncle William, who had gone out in 1835, they'd only laid him to rest a few months ago at the ripe old age of 87, after 65 years in the city. He barely remembered his father, he died before William was 4. Life must have been hard for his mother as a widow with 3 children under 4. She had married again some 4 years later. He'd been pleased to go and live with his grandparents, he had his own bed, in a less crowded home. He hadn't really cared much for his stepfather, not that he had been unkind to him, and it had been good that his mother had a man to look after her again.

Thinking back, even as a boy, there'd been something in him that wanted more than to become a gardener or a farm labourer like his grandfather and father. Not that he'd ever voiced that desire to anyone, they would have laughed at him, told him his lot was to remain part of the working-class masses. But it wasn't, he hadn't. "Bourgeois" the enumerator had deemed him, part of the band of Montreal middle class property owners. He'd every reason to be proud of the way he'd clawed his way up from a boy helping out on his uncle's farm, to becoming a small businessman, then a merchant and investor in property. There had been a steady flow of goods through his warehouse down at the docks, the profits had provided a decent home, meant his children were well fed, well clothed, well educated.

His success was tinged with a goodly measure of sadness. His beloved Ann hadn't lived to see her 44th birthday. He'd lodged with her family as a young man of 21, had noticed the spark of ambition in her, been drawn to her as a kindred spirit, even though she was 10 years his senior. How he wished she had been able to reap the full rewards of climbing the social ladder. She'd been right there with him on the first part

of that climb, often helping him up onto the next rung. She had been disappointed to present him with only one daughter during their 9 years of marriage. That daughter, Sarah, was now married with a growing gaggle of children of her own.

Then there was Fanny. It was very much an arranged marriage. Her father knew he was dying and was anxious to find her a husband. She was his sole heir, he had been fearful she would fall prey to some young buck who would fritter away the fruits of his labours. He'd wanted an older steadier man for her, someone who had also worked hard to get where he was. He'd insisted on a marriage settlement that ensured that Fanny would ultimately retain ownership of part of the property that would come to her, so that, as a widow, she would be comfortably off, not left to the mercy of her husband's bequests, or the whim of his heir. William been far from sure of the wisdom of marrying an 18-year-old, she was 15 years his junior, but such age differences were not uncommon amongst the middle class. Her father had assured him that she was older than her years, having managed his household following her mother's death. He'd done well out the marriage financially, and a mutual affection had developed between them over the years. She had given him 3 sons and another daughter, but Walter, the oldest of the boys, had no interest in the business, his heart was set on becoming a physician. Norman, his middle son, was more like him than the other two, but he'd already crossed the border into Vermont at 15 to carve out his own future. Ernest, his youngest boy, had no apparent ambitions at all. But it was Maud, the baby of the family at 16, that worried him most, there was a strange fragility about her. He never dreamed that he would outlive Fanny, but he'd lost her almost 3 years ago, she too departed just short of her 44th birthday. With none of his children looking to pick up the reigns of the warehouse after him, and Fanny gone, his heart had no longer been in the business. So, he'd sold it and sunk the proceeds into property.

So here he was in 1901, a "bourgeois", a long way from that 11-year-old sitting in his gardener grandfather's cottage 50 years ago. A man proud of the fact that he'd made so much more of his life than even he had thought possible, but sad that what he had built would disappear when he finally went to his maker.

Postscripts –

William died in 1907 aged 66.

Sarah had 8 living children and passed away in Montreal in 1953 aged 88.

Walter became a physician. Canadian and US passenger lists and other records show that he travelled extensively, visiting Europe, the Middle East and Mexico as well as the US, often accompanied by his brother Ernest. Neither of them married, they resided together in various locations across Canada. Walter died of liver cancer in 1930 and is buried in Toronto. Ernest is listed as the informant at his death, but I can find no trace of him after 1930.

Maud was sadly confined to the Asylum in Selkirk Manitoba some time after her father's death, she is recorded as a resident in both 1911 and 1916.

Norman remained in Vermont until his death in 1969, he didn't rise to the middle classes in that state, but all of those bearing the surname Peatman in that area stem from him.